

ARTICLE APPEARED
PAGE _____BALTIMORE SUN
4 December 1984

Westmoreland says LBJ sought facts substantiating success in Vietnam

NEW YORK (AP) — President Lyndon B. Johnson didn't pressure officers to produce good news about the Vietnam War — but he did want "hard, honest facts" to support his belief that the United States was winning, retired Gen. William C. Westmoreland testified yesterday.

General Westmoreland, who commanded U.S. troops in Vietnam from 1964 to 1968, was on the witness stand for the eighth day in his \$120 million libel suit against CBS. He maintains that the network knowingly or recklessly broadcast false charges against him in its 1982 television documentary, "The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception," which accused General Westmoreland of deliberately suppressing unfavorable news in 1967 about rising enemy troop strength.

General Westmoreland, 70, told CBS lawyer David E. Boies that he was "unaware of any pressure" from President Johnson to produce good news. But he said he believed at the time that good news was what Mr. Johnson expected.

"I was aware, primarily through the ambassador [to South Vietnam, the late Ellsworth Bunker] ... that Mr. Johnson and his advisers were convinced that we were making progress in Vietnam, and he wanted hard, honest facts so that would be recognized," General Westmoreland said. "They thought credit should be given where credit was due."

General Westmoreland said he did not closely follow a 1975 congressional investigation into charges similar to the ones CBS made in its broadcast. He had retired three years earlier as secretary of the Army, and newspapers such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, which reported on the hearings, were not widely accessible in his hometown of Charleston, S.C., he said.

A House committee chaired by Representative Otis G. Pike (D, N.Y.) began the inquiry after the publication of a *Harper's* magazine article written by Samuel A. Adams, a former analyst for the Central Intelligence Agency who went on to become a consultant for the CBS broadcast. The article was edited by George L. Crile, who later became a CBS producer and produced "The Uncounted Enemy."

Mr. Crile and Mr. Adams are codefendants in General Westmoreland's suit along with correspondent Mike Wallace, who narrated the broadcast.

The Pike committee reported that certain categories of enemy personnel were abruptly dropped from the strength estimate in 1967 "in what appears to have been an arbitrary attempt to maintain some ceiling." The committee did not directly accuse General Westmoreland of wrongdoing.

CBS and General Westmoreland agree that three categories of Communist forces — political cadres, "self-defense" and "secret self-defense" forces — were abruptly removed from the "order of battle," or estimate of enemy strength, in late 1967.

However, General Westmoreland denies that he sought to exclude those forces for political reasons. He said he had concluded that they did not pose a military threat and that to continue to include them, particularly after newer estimates placed them at higher levels, would be "misleading."

CBS asserted that General Westmoreland's policy kept reported enemy strength below 300,000 when it actually should have been reported as more than 500,000. As a result, the network said, President Johnson and other leaders may have been taken by surprise when the Communists launched the powerful Tet offensive in early 1968.